

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
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O R 291000Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7831
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2451

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, LE
SUBJECT: HOSS DESIGNATED TO FORM NEW CABINET

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. PRESIDENT SARKIS ON APRIL 28
REDESIGNATED SALIM AL HOSS AS PRIME MINISTER.
HOSS AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN PREDICTED THE NEW GOVERNMENT
WOULD BE FORMED QUICKLY, ALTHOUGH WHO WILL REPRESENT
THE SYRIAN VIEWPOINT AND THE LEFTIST NATIONAL MOVEMENT,
AND THE IDENTITY OF THE DEFENSE MINISTER, MAY STILL BE
PROBLEMS. IN ANY EVENT, THE NEW CABINET WILL ALMOST
CERTAINLY NOT BE A "CABINET OF GIANTS." END SUMMARY.

2. ON APRIL 28, PRESIDENT SARKIS DESIGNATED OUTGOING
PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL HOSS TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT.
IN A SUBSEQUENT STATEMENT, AL HOSS CALLED
ON ALL LEBANESE "TO RALLY ROUND THE PRESIDENT IN THIS
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DELICATE AND FATEFUL STAGE OF LEBANESE HISTORY."
IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
DAILY IKE HE SAID: "THE SLOGAN OF MY FIRST GOVERNMENT
WAS RECONSTRUCTION; I THINK NATIONAL ACCORD MIGHT BE
A PROPER SLOGAN FOR THE NEXT ONE."

3. HOSS TOLD IKE THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE A

MAXIMUM OF 18 MINISTERS AND THAT HE HOPED TO FORM IT "RATHER QUICKLY." THE MORNING OF APRIL 29, HOSS BEGAN CONSULTATIONS WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY BLOC LEADERS ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. CAMILLE CHAMOUN PREDICTED THE NEW CABINET WOULD BE FORMED BY APRIL 30, WHILE L'ORIENT LE JOUR SAID BY MAY 1.

4. SOME OBSTACLES TO THE FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT MAY REMAIN, HOWEVER, PRO-SYRIAN BAATH PARTY HEAD ASSIM QANSUH TOLD EMBOFF MORNING OF APRIL 28 (BEFORE HOSS WAS REAPPOINTED) THAT:

A. CAMILLE CHAMOUN WAS AGREEABLE TO KAMAL SHATILLA OR TELAL MERHABI IN THE CABINET TO REPRESENT THE SYRIAN POINT OF VIEW, BUT NOT QANSUH HIMSELF. QAHSUH CLAIMED THAT SYRIA WOULD VETO THE FORMATION OF ANY GOVERNMENT IN WHICH HE HIMSELF WAS NOT A CABINET MEMBER.

B. THE SYRIANS WOULD ACCEPT ONLY WALID JUNBLATT FROM THE REST OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT IN THE NEW CABINET.

5. ALTHOUGH THE CABINET MEMBERS ARE NOT YET KNOWN, IT SEEMS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BE EXCLUSIVE EITHER A "CABINET OF GIANTS" CONFIDENTIAL

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OR A PARLIAMENTARY CABINET. CAMILLE CHAMOUN SAID THAT "THE FORMULA OF A CABINET OF GIANTS HAS BEEN REJECTED BY THE AUTHORITIES; SIMILARLY, THE FORMULA OF A 100 PERCENT PARLIAMENTARY MINISTRY IS HENCEFORTH REJECTED."

6. ANOTHER POSSIBLE STUMBLING BLOCK IS POSITION OF DEFENSE MINISTRY. SUNNIS AND NATIONAL MOVEMENT APPEAR TO FAVOR GABY LAHOUD, FORMER ARMY G-2 UNDER PRESIDENT CHEHAB. BOTH ALBERT MANSOUR AND ADNAN HAKIM, HEAD OF THE AL-NAJJADAH PARTY, HAVE STATED HE ENJOYS WIDE SUPPORT FOR THE JOB. LAHOUD IS UNACCEPTABLE TO CAMILLE CHAMOUN, HOWEVER.

7. CHAMOUN REFUSED TO COMMENT DIRECTLY ON THE REAPPOINTMENT OF HOSS, SAYING THAT "IT IS NECESSARY FIRST TO KNOW THE COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT." PIERRE GEMAYEL, HOWEVER, PRAISED HOSS. BOTH CONSERVATIVE AND LEFTISTS MUSLIMS HAVE REITERATED THEIR SUPPORT FOR HOSS' REAPPOINTMENT OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS.
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